

xombies of raven peak

Z.K. Walker

Mead Hall Media

prologue

The blizzard deepened unnoticed, its winds carrying eerie whispers that seemed to slither through the darkness, unsettling and unearthly. The storm's fury grew with an evil purpose, veiling the mountain in a swirling shroud of ice and shadow. Beneath the chaos, unseen currents of cold and dread churned as if Raven Peak itself held its breath, bracing for the return of something ancient, something unspeakable.

Atop Raven Peak, under the looming shadow of jagged cliffs, a research station clung to the mountain like a fragile beacon against the encroaching night. Snow lashed its reinforced windows, the storm's fury rising as if summoned by an unseen force. The hum of machinery inside seemed faint, insignificant against the gathering roar beyond the walls.

Her breath curling into frost-laden air, Dr. Sophia Patel stood transfixed before the artifact resting in containment. Her voice trembled as she spoke, almost reverent in its awe.

"The Frostheart," she murmured, "is the key to history's darkest mystery."

Encased in layers of ancient ice, the Frostheart was a crystalline shard that pulsed faintly with an eerie, bluish light—legends told of its origins: the weapon of Ukko, a wrathful god of winter. The Frostheart was said to be the source of an ancient plague—the Xombies, frost-twisted monstrosities born of ice and death, unleashed in an era when gods walked the earth. Only through divine intervention was the Frostheart locked away, hidden deep within the mountain to ensure its curse would never return.

Dr. Marcus Reed, the station's director, and a pragmatic engineer, watched from the observation deck. His sharp eyes scanned the containment chamber, where robotic arms gingerly chiseled away at the artifact's icy prison. "Sophia, this thing's been buried for millennia for a reason," he said, his tone laced with concern. "We shouldn't mess with it."

Patel shot him a determined look. "Marcus, this could rewrite everything we know about human history, energy, and life itself! You've seen the readings—this isn't just an artifact. It's alive in some way."

"Exactly my point," Reed countered. "We have no idea what we're dealing with."

The Frostheart's glow intensified, bathing the room in an unearthly hue. Patel's voice softened. "We'll take every precaution. Trust me. We're not here to repeat the past."

The containment chamber buzzed with activity. Scanners captured the Frostheart's energy emissions while robotic appendages carefully removed layers of encasing

frost. The air grew colder, the chill seeping into the control room despite the industrial heaters.

"Temperature's dropping fast," one technician reported, a bead of sweat freezing on his brow. "Whatever this thing is, it's pulling heat directly from the environment."

Patel nodded. "Keep monitoring. We need to understand its mechanisms before—"

A piercing shriek interrupted her, not mechanical, not human. The Frostheart's glow flared violently, sending tremors through the station. The machines faltered, their steady hum replaced by crackling static. The lights flickered as if the artifact were draining power from the very walls.

"Shut it down!" Reed barked. "Now!"

"It's not responding!" another scientist shouted, frantically pressing buttons on the console.

The Frostheart vibrated, its icy shell shattering to reveal jagged edges and a crystalline core pulsing like a heartbeat. A wave of energy rippled outward, striking one of the scientists, Dr. Caleb Hensley. He staggered back, clutching his chest as frost spread across his skin like a living thing.

"Caleb!" Patel screamed, rushing toward him.

Hensley's eyes snapped open, glowing with the Frostheart's spectral blue light. He let out a guttural growl, his body convulsing violently. His veins darkened, spreading across his frostbitten skin in jagged lines. Before anyone could react, he lunged at the nearest technician, moving with terrifying speed.

The technician barely had time to scream before Hensley's icy grip closed around his throat. A sickening crack echoed through the room as the technician collapsed, lifeless, frost covering his body.

"Hensley's turned!" Reed shouted, pulling Patel back.
"Everyone out, now!"

The control room erupted into chaos. Scientists scrambled for the exits as Hensley—or what he had become—moved like a predator unleashed. Frost spread across the walls and floor wherever he stepped, plummeting the room's temperature. Equipment short-circuited, monitors shattered, and the Frostheart pulsed rhythmically, as if feeding on the destruction.

Patel stumbled, her eyes locked on the artifact. "We can't leave it like this! We don't know what it's capable of!"

"We know enough!" Reed shouted, dragging her toward the door. "Move, or you're next!"

As they fled into the corridor, the sound of shattering glass filled the air. The Frostheart's energy erupted, sending shards of ice through the control room. Behind them, Hensley's guttural growls grew louder, followed by the sickening sounds of another victim succumbing to the curse.

Reed slammed the emergency lockdown button, sealing the corridor behind a reinforced steel door. He and Patel stood in stunned silence, the muffled chaos from the control room echoing through the walls. Outside, the blizzard intensified, snow battering the windows as if mirroring the rage within.

Patel broke the silence, her voice a trembling whisper.
"What have we done?"

Reed's expression hardened. "We woke something that should have stayed buried."

Inside the sealed room, the Frostheart's glow intensified, its energy seeping through the station. The storm

outside grew fiercer, and faint shadows moved in the blizzard—more figures, unnatural and jerking, answering the artifact's call.

Winter's wrath had returned. The cycle had begun anew.

xombies of raven peak

The storm of the century hammered Raven Peak, burying the ski resort under mounting snow. Winds shrieked and tore at buildings while ice-heavy pine branches snapped like bones. Through the brutal cold—far below minus forty-something—impossible stirred.

Whispers of horror crept through the resort like a draft, passed between shivering guests over tepid coffee in the lodge's shelter. Then screams rang across the mountain, and Raven Peak's people knew they were stranded in a frozen nightmare. The backup generators fought the blizzard's assault, their fading whine signaling civilization's tenuous grip.

Outside, Mark trudged through the blinding snow, his face numb beneath a frost-crusted balaclava. Sent to dig out a stranded guest, he'd turned back as the storm intensified, ice crystals cutting like razors. Approaching the Snowcat, he saw a shadow darker than the whiteout should allow. Initially, he thought it was a lost skier, but then he saw it - a

figure, impossibly fast and strong, its face a frozen mask of rage, skin mottled blue-white like glacier ice.

Mark tried to flee, but he slipped into the snow, terror gripping him as the creature seized him. Its icy touch burned with a cold beyond winter, its eyes reflecting the Snowcat's headlights with a dead glow. The wind drowned Mark's screams as the creature tightened its grip, breaking bones. The Snowcat's engine died in the brutal cold, leaving Mark's lifeless body with frost-covered eyes, a chilling reminder of the storm's deadly embrace.

In the resort's main lodge, Hondo secured emergency supplies while watching dark clouds mass overhead through frost-etched windows. His military training kicked in as he cataloged their resources—medical kits, thermal blankets, and emergency rations. The lodge's warmth wouldn't last forever.

"Those generators better hold." Abby hauled another crate of supplies from the pub's storage. Her boots squeaked against the polished floor. "I can jury-rig the backup system, but we'll need every watt."

"Better than freezing." Hondo stacked water bottles in neat rows. "Where's that hotshot snowboarder? C-Note should've been back an hour ago."

The lodge doors burst open in a swirl of snow. C-Note stomped in, his board strapped to his back, grinning despite the blue tinge to his lips. "You should see it out there! The powder's insane. Could be the run of a lifetime."

"Could be your last run." Wes stepped from the fireplace shadows, snow on his ranger uniform. "Found tracks by Miller's Ridge. Not animal or human." His face tightened. "Something else."

"What kind of tracks?" Hondo's hand unconsciously moved to where his service weapon would have been.

"The kind that makes an old ranger consider a desk job." Wes pulled out his satellite phone. "Can't raise anyone outside the valley. Storm's not natural."

Abby dropped her wrench with a clang. "Define 'not natural.'"

"Started too fast. Moving wrong. And those tracks..." Wes shook his head. "Twenty years in these mountains, never seen anything like it."

C-Note's laugh fractured midway, hanging like a broken icicle. "Come on, you're not—" The sound died in his throat.

A howl erupted outside, so primal and alien it seemed to vibrate the lodge's wooden bones. It wasn't the mourning cry of a wolf or the territorial scream of a mountain lion—this existed beyond nature's known vocabulary. This sound spoke of impossible hunger and ancient, frozen malevolence.

The lights flickered once, twice. Then darkness swallowed the lodge.

The backup generator sputtered and died, plunging the lodge into darkness, broken only by emergency lights casting sickly shadows across frightened faces. The wind rattled the windows with increasing fury.

"Everyone stay calm." Hondo's steady, commanding voice cut through panicked murmurs, a result of years of military service. Abby, check those generators."

"On it." Her footsteps faded toward the utility room, boots squeaking against the polished floor.

C-Note pressed against a frost-covered window, his breath fogging the glass. "Hey, there's someone out there!"

A figure stumbled across the slope through the swirling snow, barely visible in the growing darkness. Then another. And another. Their movements jerky, unnatural, like broken marionettes in the wind.

"Those are the Hamilton kids." Wes grabbed his coat, recognition dawning in his weathered face. "They went missing this morning on the blue run. Search team's been out for hours."

Bloody, broken, and pale, the Hamiltons stumbled closer. "Help... they're coming..." the eldest girl rasped, her arm bent at an unnatural angle. Hondo and Wes yanked the door open, pulling them inside. The survivors' frozen clothes crackled; their skin burned with cold.

"What happened out there?" Wes supported the limping boy, who left trails of pink-tinged snow in his wake.

"Monsters..." The girl's teeth chattered violently, lips blue and cracking. "In the trees... like ice... they took Mom and Dad... just grabbed them..."

"How many were attacked?" Hondo checked their pupils, his medic training kicking in, noting the signs of severe hypothermia and shock.

"Everyone... at the upper lodge." The boy sobbed, tears freezing on his cheeks. "They just... appeared from nowhere. Moving so fast... like blurs in the snow..."

As more survivors stumbled into view, their frost-covered clothes torn and their faces etched with terror, Hondo yelled out, "Get them inside, now!" The sheer number of them was alarming, and Wes's expression turned grim as he helped the latest arrivals into the lodge. One of

them, a young woman, clung to Wes's arm, her eyes wide with fear. "It wasn't human or animal," she gasped, her voice barely audible. "It was like... walking ice. With eyes that glowed like embers." The lights in the lodge flickered ominously as another wave of survivors appeared, their terrified cries echoing off the walls.

* * *

The survivors huddled in the lodge, tension thick in the air as stories spilled from trembling lips. One by one, they recounted encounters with the Xombies—people twisted into ice-encrusted monstrosities, their glowing eyes cutting through the storm like searchlights. Their movements were unnatural, jerky, yet terrifyingly fast, and their frozen forms made a bone-chilling scrape as they brushed against frosted windows.

The warmth of the lodge's crackling fireplace, once a source of comfort, now felt like a beacon inviting disaster. Each pop and crack of the burning logs seemed to echo the survivors' rising fear. Hondo, Abby, C-Note, and Wes sat in stunned silence, absorbing the horror as it unfolded.

"What's causing this?" Abby finally asked, her voice taut with both fear and determination. She absently adjusted the knobs on a battered radio, desperately trying to patch through to anyone beyond the blizzard's wrath. Static answered her efforts, an oppressive reminder of their isolation.

Wes broke his silence, his weathered face grim under the flickering firelight. "I might have an idea." His voice was low, as though speaking louder might summon the horrors

outside. "Before this storm hit, the research team reported some strange findings. They uncovered... something. An artifact buried deep in the woods. Old. Really old. I think it's tied to this. They called it a Frostheart." His fingers nervously tapped the stock of his rifle as the others stared at him in disbelief.

"A Frostheart?" Abby said, her brow furrowing. "You're telling me some ancient relic is behind all this?" Her tone carried skepticism, but an undeniable spark of curiosity was beneath it.

Hondo leaned forward, a memory surfacing that made his jaw tighten. "I saw something on my way here," he said slowly, his voice steady but low. "A symbol carved into a tree. It wasn't natural. It pulsed like it was alive, glowing blue against the snow. And the air around it—it wasn't just cold. It felt... wrong. Like it didn't belong in this world."

C-Note, ever the skeptic, let out a short, nervous laugh. "Come on; you're saying some ancient doodad is turning people into glowing popsicles? This sounds like something out of a bad movie."

"It's not a movie," Wes snapped, his voice sharp. "I've been patrolling these mountains for decades, and I've never seen anything like this. Whatever that team dug up, it unleashed something. Now we're dealing with the fallout."

Before anyone could respond, a sharp crash shattered the uneasy calm. Everyone froze, ears straining. The sound came again—closer this time—the unmistakable crunch of boots on snow, heavy and deliberate. Then, with a gut-wrenching finality, glass shattered, sending shards flying into the room as the icy wind howled through the breach.

The group scrambled into action. Hondo grabbed a

makeshift weapon, an iron poker, from the fireplace while Wes leveled his rifle at the dark void beyond the window. Abby frantically tried to douse the fire, but the damage was already done—the warmth and light had lured the Xombies straight to them.

Shadows moved against the storm, grotesque figures emerging from the swirling snow. Their jagged, ice-laden bodies glinted in the dim firelight, and their glowing eyes burned with unholy rage. The lead Xombie let out an inhuman screech, a sound that cut through the survivors like a blade.

"They've found us!" C-Note shouted, his bravado cracking under the weight of terror.

"Barricade the doors!" Hondo barked, his military training kicking in as he shoved a table against the breach. "Abby, we need that generator back online. Now!"

"I'm on it!" she yelled, grabbing her tools and sprinting toward the utility room, her heart pounding.

As the survivors scrambled to fortify their sanctuary, the Xombies advanced relentlessly and unyieldingly. Each impact against the lodge's walls sent tremors through the building, a chilling reminder that the warm, flickering fire they clung to was as much a curse as a comfort.

"Stay focused!" Hondo shouted, swinging the poker at an arm clawed through the broken window. "We hold them off as long as we can!"

Through the chaos, Wes's rifle cracked, each shot carefully aimed, but the Xombies were too many. The storm outside howled in fury as if the mountain conspired against them. And amid the chaos, Hondo couldn't shake a gnawing thought: they weren't just fighting to survive the

Xombies—they were racing against something far worse, something tied to an old stone, a Frostheart that pulsed in the dark.

* * *

The storm escalated into a tempest of ice and fury, with howling winds battering the lodge as if nature were seeking its demise. Inside, the survivors felt the mounting pressure of the encroaching doom. The Xombies grew more aggressive with each passing hour, their glowing eyes fixated on the lodge—a beacon of warmth and life amid the frozen wasteland.

Huddled around a dim lantern, the group grappled with their grim reality. "They're not just drawn to the warmth," Abby said, her voice barely above a whisper. "They're spreading some kind of infection—through touch, maybe even just being near them."

Hondo's jaw tightened. "That explains why the Hamilton boy turned so quickly." He glanced around the circle of weary faces. Trust was eroding, fear sowing seeds of doubt. "We need to stick together. It's the only way we'll survive this."

C-Note stood abruptly. "Sitting here isn't doing us any good. Supplies are running low. I'll scavenge for more in the eastern wing." His bravado masked the tremor in his voice.

"That area's a maze," Wes cautioned. "Easy to get lost, especially with parts of the resort collapsing."

"I can handle it," C-Note retorted, grabbing a flashlight and an ice axe before slipping into the shadows.

As he disappeared, Abby turned to Hondo and said,

"We need a solution, fast. If the infection is energy-based, maybe we can disrupt it."

Hondo raised an eyebrow. "How?"

She spread out Dr. Calloway's scattered research papers. "The artifact—the Frostheart—emits a specific frequency of cold energy. If we can generate a counter-frequency, we might neutralize it."

He nodded slowly. "What do you need?"

"Equipment from the maintenance rooms, wiring, any portable power sources. But most importantly, we need to get close to the Frostheart."

Wes shook his head. "That's suicide. The upper lodge is overrun."

"Do we have a choice?" Abby shot back. "If we don't stop this at the source, we're done for."

Meanwhile, C-Note navigated the deserted corridors, the beam of his flashlight slicing through the darkness. The resort creaked around him, the weight of the snow threatening to bring the whole structure down. He rummaged through storerooms, filling his pack with canned food, batteries, and a dusty two-way radio.

A distant sound froze him—a faint scratching, growing louder. He swung the flashlight toward the noise. Nothing. His pulse quickened as he backed away, only to collide with something solid. Spinning around, he came face-to-face with a Xombie, its icy visage inches from his own. He gasped, stumbling back as the creature reached out. Acting on instinct, he swung the ice axe, shattering the Xombie's arm. Seizing the moment, he fled, the creature's screech echoing behind him.

Back at the lodge, the attacks intensified. The Xombies

battered the barricades with relentless force. Wes and Hondo fought side by side, using makeshift spears and what little ammunition remained. "They just keep coming!" Wes shouted over the din.

Abby rushed in, clutching a hastily assembled device. "I think I've got it—a portable EMP generator. It should disrupt the Frostheart's energy, at least temporarily."

Hondo glanced at the fragile apparatus. "And you're sure it will work?"

She met his gaze with steely determination. "No. But it's all we've got."

"Then we make our move," he decided. "Wes, stay here and hold them off as long as possible."

"I'm coming with you," Wes insisted.

Hondo placed a firm hand on his shoulder. "We need you here. If we fail, you're the last line of defense."

Reluctantly, Wes agreed. "Good luck."

As Hondo and Abby prepared to leave, the door burst open, and C-Note stumbled in, breathless. "They're right behind me!"

A horde of Xombies swarmed the hallway, drawn by the heat and movement. "Go!" Wes yelled, firing into the mass. "I'll buy you time!"

With no time to argue, Hondo, Abby, and C-Note slipped out through a side exit, plunging into the storm's icy wrath. The resort's grounds were unrecognizable—a twisted landscape of snow drifts and shattered structures. Navigating by memory and sheer will, they pressed toward the upper lodge.

C-Note winced, lagging. "Wait... I think I was... scratched."

Abby's eyes widened. "What? When?"

"Back in the east wing," he admitted, pulling back his sleeve to reveal a jagged, frostbitten wound.

"We can't stop now," Hondo urged. "Can you keep moving?"

C-Note nodded weakly. "Yeah... yeah, I can."

They reached the excavation site—a gaping maw in the mountainside leading into an icy cavern. Inside, the Frostheart stood embedded in the rock, a towering shard of luminescent ice pulsing with malevolent energy.

Abby set up the EMP device, her fingers numb and clumsy. "I just need a minute," she said.

As Hondo stood guard between Abby and the cavern entrance, he knew time was running out. "We don't have a minute," he warned.

The darkness erupted into chaos as Xombies emerged, drawn by the Frostheart's power.

Among them, Dr. Calloway's twisted form loomed, his eyes aglow with an unnatural light.

C-Note stepped forward, his face set with determination. "I'll hold them off," he said, his voice firm despite the resignation in his eyes. Hondo opened his mouth to protest, but C-Note cut him off.

"I'm already turning, Hondo. Let me do this." His breath misted in the cold air as he gazed at his friends, a look of sad resolve etched on his face.

Before they could protest, he charged at the advancing Xombies, wielding his ice axe with fierce determination. The creatures swarmed him, but he fought with a strength born of desperation.

Abby activated the EMP. "It's ready!"

"Do it now!" Hondo shouted.

She pressed the trigger. A high-pitched whine filled the air as a wave of energy burst from the device. The Frostheart flickered, its glow sputtering. The Xombies convulsed, their movements erratic.

"Is it working?" Abby asked, hope in her voice.

For a moment, it seemed they had succeeded. But the Frostheart surged back to life, brighter than before. "It's overloading!" Abby realized. "We need to destroy it physically."

Hondo set his jaw. "Get out of here. I'll finish it."

"I'm not leaving you," she insisted.

"Abby, if we both stay, no one makes it out. Wes and the others need to know we tried."

Tears welled in her eyes. "You'd better come back."

He offered a faint smile. "I'll do my best."

She turned and ran, disappearing into the swirling snow.

Hondo faced the Frostheart, determination hardening into resolve. He grabbed a fallen beam coated in oil and ignited it with a flare. The improvised torch blazed to life. He advanced on the artifact, Xombies closing in from all sides.

With a primal yell, he drove the burning beam into the heart of the Frostheart. The cavern shook as cracks spider-webbed across the crystalline surface. A roar filled the air as the artifact shattered in an explosion of light and ice.

The blast threw Abby off her feet outside. The storm abruptly ceased, and the clouds parted to reveal a sky painted with the first hues of dawn. The oppressive cold lifted, replaced by the natural chill of the mountains.

She stumbled back to the lodge, where Wes and a handful of survivors emerged, gazing in awe at the calm morning. "He did it," Abby whispered.

Weeks later, rescue teams arrived to find a decimated resort and a handful of survivors with harrowing tales few believed. Official reports cited an unprecedented avalanche and storm combination. The artifact remained buried, its pieces lost among the rubble.

Abby and Wes stood at a makeshift memorial for those lost, including Hondo and C-Note. "Think it'll stay buried?" Wes asked quietly.

"I hope so," Abby replied. "But if it doesn't, we'll be ready."

They departed the mountain, carrying the weight of their experience and a promise never to forget the sacrifices made.

epilogue

Deep beneath Raven Peak, amidst the icy debris and twisted metal from the destruction above, a faint blue glow pulsed in the darkness—a shard of the Frostheart still intact, no larger than a fingernail but radiating an ancient cold that frosted the rocks around it. It lay there, dormant but not dead, waiting for the unsuspecting to awaken its power once more, to begin the cycle of winter's wrath anew.

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